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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 000797

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2019
TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER MOPS PK IN

SUBJECT: NSA NARAYANAN SHARES VIEWS ON SECURITY AND U.S.
RELATIONSHIP WITH CODEL BERMAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter Burleigh for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan described to a visiting congressional delegation led by Representative Howard Berman April 17 what he viewed as a genuine convergence of interests between India and the United States, as well as his concerns about Pakistan-based terrorism and creeping regional radicalization. In addition to reflections on the bilateral relationship, the two sides discussed the new U.S. Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, counter-terrorism coordination, India's rivalry with China, and India's support for global efforts to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. END SUMMARY.

Convergence of Interests on Nonproliferation, Issues of "Maximum Concern"
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¶2. (C) National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan opened the meeting by sharing how much he had looked forward to shaking hands with Congressman Berman to thank him for his ultimate support of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative. Congressman Berman confessed to having demonstrated his friendship in a "most peculiar way," but stressed the importance of working together on nonproliferation efforts of mutual concern, such as preventing Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons and shoring up the nonproliferation regime. Narayanan replied that he foresaw no problems in this regard, adding that India appreciated the course U.S. nonproliferation policies seemed to be taking under the Obama Administration.

¶3. (C) Narayanan elaborated on what he saw as a genuine convergence of interests between the United States and India for the first time. The meeting between President Obama and Prime Minister Singh went extremely well in Narayanan's estimation, with the President charismatically articulating the importance of the relationship in a way the Indians appreciated. Narayanan asserted, "On the issues of maximum concern, there is no area of difference in interests, just of nuance." "This kind of relationship was never thought possible 10 years ago," according to Narayanan, who stressed

"a convergence of interests on a wide range of issues including climate change, the economy, education, health, and food and energy security." "We can finally see one another as true strategic partners," according to Narayanan, adding that it was not impossible to think in terms of a "compact of democracies."

The Threat of Pakistan-based Terrorism

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¶4. (C) India fully backed the new U.S. policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, according to Narayanan. Pakistan is surely part of the problem, but India also acknowledges that it must also be part of the solution. The U.S. has a very important role to play, and India must act "in concert." Narayanan lamented Pakistan's over-dependence on its increasingly radicalized army. Congressman Berman asked for Narayanan's assessment of the belief in the United States Government that Pakistan can, with the right help and effort, become a true partner in fighting terrorism. Narayanan asserted that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) retains ties with Lashkar-e-Tayiba (LET) and Jaish-e-Mohammad, while the Pakistan Army continues to base its strategy on the retention of "strategic depth" in Afghanistan. Pakistan's strategic outlook needs to change.

¶5. (C) Congressman Berman asked how he should respond to Pakistanis who point to India's consulates in Afghanistan to justify their sense of insecurity from their eastern neighbor. Narayanan replied that the fact that Pakistan views a handful of personnel at four consulates as an indication that India is out to "dismember" Pakistan reflects the a sense of the deep obsession among Pakistan's security establishment. After fifty years in the intelligence business, he assured the delegation that "my people are not that good." India and Afghanistan have been neighbors for hundreds of years and "have every reason to be close to one another." In fact, Narayanan asserted, "There is very little hostility in India toward Pakistan and most Indians do not think much about it." Those who do think about strategic threats focus on China.

Concerns of Creeping Radicalization

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¶6. (C) Apart from the immediate threat from Pakistan-based terrorism, India's greatest fear is that creeping radicalism in Pakistan will affect the secular character of Indian Muslims. Alluding to terrorist training camps and radicalized madrassas in Pakistan, Narayanan opined that the basic issue fueling radicalization is the desire among radical Muslims to restore an Islamic Caliphate. A substantial number of Islamic clergy in India are moderate, but they readily admit that Muslim Indians do not always listen to them. He added that India's Deobandi School is the only Muslim seminary that has issued a fatwah against terror, but conceded that it lacks credibility among Pakistani Muslims.

¶7. (C) Narayanan speculated that the next major terrorist attack on the U.S. is likely to originate from the South Asian region. He lamented that terrorists are finding old-fashioned techniques and fire arms so effective as tools of terrorism. We are nowhere near the tipping point on terrorism, according to Narayanan, who suspects it will get worse before it gets better. India has been a victim of terrorism for three decades, so India has much to share. It also has much to learn, according to Narayanan, who stressed the importance of increased security and intelligence cooperation in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks.

Post-Mumbai Introspection and Intelligence-sharing

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¶8. (C) In reply to Member of Congress Ed Royce's inquiry about the lessons India learned from the Mumbai attacks and Sheila Jackson-Lee's inquiry about whether India has shored up intelligence and security lapses, Narayanan shared that

India had taken steps on both counts. Narayanan expressed gratitude to the U.S. and UK for sharing accurate intelligence prior to the attacks, but regretted that by the time the attacks took place a month later it had fallen off the radar screen. He said no one believed terrorists could arrive by sea and conduct a commando-style attack as they did. He shared that each of the intelligence chiefs that have visited him since the attacks agreed that their own countries could be vulnerable to similar attacks if they lacked specific advance intelligence about the type of attack. Narayanan said he suspects another such attack may be in preparation and stressed the importance of intelligence sharing, saying the process should evolve from "sharing pieces of paper" to engaging one another to discuss and evaluate threats.

Intense Rivalry With China, Support International Efforts on Iran

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¶9. (C) Congressman Gary Ackerman asked about India's sense of China as a threat, and about what India is willing to do to deter Iran's nuclear ambitions. Narayanan conceded that the immediate threat to India's security from China is low, adding that his experience in talks with the Chinese about their shared border suggest that China has no interest in rash action. However, "intense" rivalry between India and China will increase over time and constitutes a long-term threat to India's security. Narayanan pointed to China's doubling of its defense budget and development of advanced defense capabilities such as submarines, satellites, and nuclear weapons, as well as its statements that the Indian Ocean cannot be left to India. China is aware that there is greater comfort globally with India than with China, and harbors a sense of insecurity about Indian democracy, a strategic asset they lack. Narayanan said he appreciated the useful exchanges of views he has had with U.S. officials on "what China is up to" and welcomed further dialogue.

¶10. (C) On Iran, Narayanan said India had made clear it will join international efforts to encourage Iran "not to cheat" on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while continuing to support its right to peaceful civil nuclear energy.

¶11. (SBU) Codel Berman did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

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